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The other is the commencement of a poem attributed to Ossian. It begins with an address to Ben Bolbin, a mountain in Connaught, and gives a very picturesque description of sylvan scenery.

"Thou art sad to-day, oh Ben Bolbin! thou calm hill whose aspect was beautiful. In other days, oh son of Alpron!* it was pleasant to be on its top. Many were the dogs and the youths—the sounds of horn and hound. "A tower was on its summit, the dwelling of a mighty hero. Oh lofty hill of contests! oft was the heron heard in the season of night, and the grouse in the heath of thy mountains, mingling their sounds with the music of the little bird. 'Twas sweet to listen to the baying of the hounds in the valleys, and the wonderful son of the rock.† All the heroes of Fingal‡ would be present, their beautiful hounds in the slips: many were the gatherers of wood, the fair daughters of our race. There grew the berries of fragrant blossom—the strawberries and the blackberries—the fragrant, purple flower of the mountain-mead—the cresses of the water—the tender grass and the verdant herb. There wandered the lovely maids of the light-waving ringlets; sweetly resounded the murmur of their voices. It was cheering to behold the eagle, and to listen to her lonely scream; to hear the growling of the otters, the barking of the foxes; and the blackbird, as sweetly she warbled on the top of the thorn—I assure thee, oh Patrick, that this place was delightful. On this hill were the seven bands of our heroes—alas! few are my friends to-night—is not my tale mournful?"

IOTA.

To the Editor of the Dublin Penny Journal.



COMMON SANDPIPER.—(*Totanus Hypoleucos*.)

This lively little bird is a regular periodical visitant, and during summer may be observed on the margin of most of the rivers, ponds, and lakes throughout the country. It is one of those animated little creatures which enliven the fisherman as he pursues his favourite recreation of angling, divesting him of that feeling of solitude which he would otherwise experience, when wandering along some of our retired mountain streams. I have not unfrequently found it my only companion for hours on some of the most solitary streams in the county of Antrim; and I have often laid down my rod, and watched the motions of my fellow traveller with feelings of unmingled pleasure. It is constantly in motion—running along the bank, or perched upon a stone, its tail moving up and down with great rapidity, and its head nodding, while the clear piping note is uttered with great sweetness. Its flight is very peculiar, though at the same

time graceful, being performed by a rapid motion of the pinions, succeeded by intervals of rest, the wings considerably bent down, and in this manner it skims rapidly over the surface of the water.

They are usually in pairs on the river; and if the locality be favourable, several of them may be seen on a very small stream. They form their nest for the most part on the bank of a river or pond, almost close to the water's edge; but in a vicinity likely to be flooded, they will withdraw further from the water. The nest is placed usually under a projecting tuft of grass or rushes; and I have once known it situated under a gooseberry-bush in the vicinity of a pond. It consists merely of a hole scraped in the ground, and lined with dried grass, &c. The eggs are four in number, of a cream colour, blotched and spotted with brown. If disturbed during the process of incubation, the female will leave the nest as quietly as possible, and from some stone or other eminence in the neighbourhood, watch with the greatest anxiety the approach of an enemy. I have frequently, on one of our rocky streams near Larne, disturbed these little birds, and have seen the female remain on a stone in the middle of the river for a very considerable time, her attention rivetted to the spot where her nest was fixed. During this period, her cry was one of the most plaintive I have ever heard, and uttered, not in the louder strain which they commonly employ, but in a much lower tone, and with a degree of sweetness scarcely conceivable. Not wishing to deprive her eggs of their necessary protectress, I have proceeded on my walk; and although I have endeavoured to conceal myself, that I might observe the manner in which she would approach the nest, so cautious was her return, that I could never trace her to the spot; yet on reaching the nest ten minutes after, I would be obliged to disturb her again. She must have gained her nest, not by flying, but by skulking through the grass and rushes. When the young are hatched, the greatest agitation is perceptible in the manner of the female. She runs along the ground like the partridge, feigning lameness, and making use of any other stratagem likely to attract the attention of the intruder; and in this manner draw him from her brood. So soon as the young are excluded from the shell, they quit the nest, although only covered with a greyish down. If discovered, and an attempt be made to take them before they are perfectly fledged, it is said that they will dash into the water, and by diving and swimming, endeavour to escape—nature exhibiting in this admirable provision for the safety of an unfledged brood, another instance of consummate wisdom.

When the young are fully fledged, they and the parent birds perform a partial emigration towards the sea-shore; and hence, in June and July, we find them in flocks of five or six along the strands of our lough. Here they remain for some time, ere their autumnal or equatorial migration. They retire to the warmer parts of Europe, to Asia, and Africa, but not, as asserted by some, to regions further north. It was said by Latham that they were found in America; but this is an error, for the common sandpiper has not been noticed by Wilson, Buonaparte, Anderson, or other writers on the subject. The spotted sandpiper, (*Totanus Macularius*), a nearly allied species, is a native of that country, and has been mentioned as having been found in Britain. This, however, is most probably a mistake, as no well authenticated instance of its capture is on record. It is so like the British species, that Bewick has figured a bird as the true spotted sandpiper, which is now ascertained to be the *Totanus Hypoleucos* in immature plumage. Wilson's description of the manners and habits, mode of nidification, eggs, food, &c. of the spotted sandpiper, agrees precisely with that of the present species; and, as Mr. Selby remarks, "we can scarcely divest ourselves of the idea that he is not describing the *Totanus Hypoleucos*." I may observe, that while in the island of Rathlin during part of last summer, I observed only three or four specimens of the common sandpiper round the coast; and although there are two considerable ponds and several marshes on the island, I did not find this little bird frequenting them.

Belfast,

JAMES D. MARSHALL, M.D.

* Son of Alpron. *Mac Calfrum*, and in other, *Mac Alpron*, that is, St. Patrick, the son of Calphernus, to whom the reputed poems of Ossian are mostly addressed. It may be well to observe that this poem was taken down from the recitation of a shepherd in the county of Mayo, by the ingenious compiler of the "Irish Minstrelsy."

† *Mac alla*, literally, "the son of the rock," is the general Irish term for an echo.

‡ The euphonic name of Fin Mac Comhal, the celebrated chief of the Fianna Erin.